International Association of Geomorphologists

The Biennial Conference of the Southern African Association of Geomorphologists (SAAG 2025)

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Report

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Report on academic development on the Southern Africa Young Geomorphology Conference held at Oudtshoorn, Western Cape, South Africa

I had the privilege to attend the recently held Southern Africa Young Geomorphology Conference in Western Cape, South Africa between 16 and 17 July 2025. On this conference, I managed to gain

valuable insights into the latest research and developments in the field of geomorphology which was quite an interesting aspect in my academic journey. The conference featured a number of sessions, including presentations, discussions, and networking opportunities which are salient aspects in as far as academic growth is concerned. The conference featured sessions on soil erosion, land degradation, climate change, sustainable land management and utility of GIS and remote sensing in the context of southern Africa. The need for interdisciplinary approaches to address complex geomorphological issues was emphasised, and in that respect, I will also explore the integration of social sciences in understanding geomorphological dynamics at different scales.

It is during this conference, that I was accorded with the opportunity to present my research and received feedback from peers and experts. I presented a paper under the GIS and remote sensing session with the topic '*Soil erosion assessment and monitoring in Shashe, Tugwi and Zibagwe sub-catchments in Zimbabwe using analysis ready blue-sky remotely sensed and in- situ data'*. I had an interaction on presentation skills which to me was quite engaging. I learnt the importance of clear and concise communication, effective use of visuals in a way that minimize verbosity, as well as how to improve confidence during a presentation. I also observed that for a presentation to be concise one must design effective visual aids to support the presentation as was demonstrated by Jay Le Roux's presentation. Without doubt, I believe these skills will be beneficial for future conferences and academic presentations.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to network with fellow researchers and establish connections with potential collaborators. I met students and professionals from various institutions and countries, including Eswatini, Lesotho and South Africa. These connections will be valuable for future research collaborations and knowledge sharing in the field of geomorphology. For instance, we have started engagements for possible scientific collaborations with Dr Kwanele Phinzi from University of Zululand and Celani Mabuza a student from Eswatini.

One of the most intriguing sessions to me was on the application of remote sensing techniques in geomorphology, which highlighted the potential for using satellite imagery to monitor land degradation. This assisted me to draw comparisons between my work and related studies being done by other geomorphologists in the region. Lessons were learnt on future research directions based on remote sensing. There was also an impactful discussion on the impact of human activities on

landscape evolution, which emphasized the need for sustainable land use practices. Above this there was also a captivating session on geomorphological hazards, which provided insights into the risks associated with dust, floods, and other natural hazards.

Overall, the conference provided valuable insights into the latest research and developments in geomorphology. Key conference takeaway included the importance of considering the social and economic context of geomorphological processes. This will assist in coming up with solutions to address some of the global pressing environmental challenges especially in resource constrained communities. It is also important to note that, the potential for using new technologies, such as remote sensing and GIS, to monitor and manage geomorphological processes should be strengthened.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the field excursion due to complications in my travelling itinerary because of inadequate funding. My travel arrangements were based on the limited available budget. The cheapest direct flight options were available on Tuesday and Friday only. The other options like Monday and Saturday were associated with overnight stays in Johannesburg, and I had no budget for food and accommodation during the transit period. Unfortunately, this meant I could not attend the field excursion or the last day of the post- conference.

The Southern Africa Young Geomorphology Conference was a valuable experience, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, networking, and skill development. Although I faced logistical and financial challenges, I gained valuable insights on presentation skills, research connections and opportunities for collaboration, as well as understanding emerging themes and different approaches used in geomorphology research. I look forward to applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the conference in my current and future research. For future conferences, I recommend that organizers consider assisting sponsored conference attendees with flights costs so that they do not miss field experiences or other important conference events. Providing affordable accommodation options, travel grants, could help increase participation and inclusivity.

I would like to thank the conference organizers, SAYG, IAG and Midlands State University for the logistics and the financial support.

Regards

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